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THE WORD "HANDFUL" IN PSALM 72:16.

The verse in which this word occurs, appeared as the Golden Text of one of our Sunday School lessons a few weeks ago. It was remarkably appropriate as an illustration of the growth of the Kingdom, analogous to Christ's parable of the Mustard Seed. But that on which the whole similarity rests—the word translated "handful"—is held by the best critics to mean *abundance*. This view, which would exactly reverse the idea that the passage now gives us, merits examination.

We study it first from the lexicographical standpoint. This word **כַּף**, occurs only in this passage. It may be the feminine form of **כַּף** which means *extremity, end*. Even in that case the meaning "handful" as that which, approaching the end, is very small in amount, is somewhat fanciful. It shows an oriental origin. It is the offspring of imagination.

The best derivation is that accepted by Gesenius, Delitzsch and Perowne. They connect it with the verb **כָּפַף** to spread abroad (used of the leprosy). Thus the idea of *abundance* very naturally follows. Besides having the authority of these most eminent Hebraists, this interpretation is that given by the Syriac version and by most Jewish lexicographers. A passage in the Midrash (quoted by Perowne) supports without doubt this view.

Having the weight of lexicographical authority in its favor, this rendering may be considered in its grammatical relations.

The apocopated imperfect **יִהְיֶה** is best taken as an optative of wish—"may there be"—in strict accordance with the precatory nature of the principal verbs throughout the psalm. Any other construction would involve great difficulties. The prayer for "abundance of corn" is perfectly natural, while a petition for a "handful" is incongruous if not absurd.

Equally strong confirmation is gained from considering the logical order of thought. The psalm is a royal psalm. Its petitions are for great things, blessings of righteousness, peace, prosperity, a universal and everlasting dominion. The idea of small beginnings has no place in such a grand survey. The very fact of its unusual, and unexpected, though forcible, character, is a very strong objection to its adoption. It would stand alone in the psalm, unconnected with anything before or after, uncalled for by the purpose or thought of the writer.

It is no confirmation of the old view or any objection to this one, that the corn is to be cast upon the tops of the mountains; for they are selected not as being sterile, and unfavorable to the growth of the grain, but, as in the third verse of the psalm, because they, being the most conspicuous portions of the landscape, especially in Palestine, would be the index of the fertility of the whole land. How forcible then the wish that these high signal-peaks be covered with an abundant growth which shall wave like Lebanon!

Thus it is seen that the critical evidence inclines most emphatically to sustain the interpretation "abundance."

The exegetical analogy, founded on the word "handful," has little or no weight as a positive argument, though with some minds a sentimental consideration would tend to preserve it. The best lexicography, the simplest grammatical and logical exegesis of this verse are all against it.

G. S. G.

A TABLE OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE.

The following table exhibits the leading incidents in the life of Abraham, and his age at the time, when that is either specified in the record or can be fixed:—

Age.	Incident.	Record.
70 [?]	Call from God at Ur of the Chaldees.....	Acts vii. 2—5
75.	Call repeated at Haran.....	Gen. xii. 1—4
	Migration from Haran to Canaan.....	xii. 4, 5.
	Halt at Sichem—third Divine manifestation between Bethel and Hai.....	xii. 6, 7.
	The Tent and the Altar.....	xii. 8.
	Journey to Egypt—intercourse with Pharaoh.....	xii. 10—20.
	Return to Bethel—separation from Lot.....	xiii. 1—13.
	Fourth Divine manifestation..	xiii. 14—17.
80. [?]	Settlement at Mamre, Hebron	xiii. 18.
	Rout of the invaders.....	xiv. 1—16.
	Interviews with Melchizedek and the king of Sodom....	xiv. 17—24.
	Fifth Divine manifestation—the covenant of faith.....	xv.
85.	Flight of Hagar.....	xvi. 1—14.
86.	Birth of Ishmael.....	xvi. 15, 16.
99.	Sixth Divine manifestation—covenant of circumcision..	xvii.
	Seventh Divine manifestation—the three angels.....	xviii. 1—14.
	Sodom and Gomorrah—Abraham's intercession.....	xviii. 16—33.
	Destruction of the cities of the plain.....	xix.
	Sojourn at Gerar—intercourse with Abimelech.....	xx.
100.	Birth of Isaac.....	xxi. 1—5.
	Casting out of Ishmael—eighth Divine manifestation....	xxi. 8—21.
	The covenant with Abimelech—Beersheba.....	xxi. 22—34.
125. [?]	The great temptation—Mount Moriah.....	xxii. 1—14.
	Ninth Divine manifestation—the oath and the blessing.	xxii. 15—18.
137.	Death and burial of Sarah....	xxiii. 1, 2.
	The cave of Machpelah.....	xxiii. 3—20.
140.	Mission for Rebekah—marriage of Isaac.....	xxiv.
	Marriage with Keturah—its issue.....	xxv. 1—4.
175.	Death and burial of Abraham.	xxv. 7—9.

—Hanna.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE ORIGINAL TEXTS.

It seems superfluous to affirm that the divine who has undertaken to interpret the Bible, ought to consult habitually the original texts. Nevertheless, the practice is neglected by many theologians, even by those who possess sufficient erudition and abundant leisure.

Frequently this neglect is simply a matter of indolence. A large class of thinkers regard the authorized versions of the Scriptures as sufficient. It is a mistake. Even the most accurate of the different translations present the truth in a veiled condition. They can simply approximate, more or less closely, the precision and clearness of the original. Every version leads, sooner or later, into error. The man who reads the original text with attention, with the requisite knowledge and disposition, discovers very frequently some new point of view, some unforeseen intention, some profound and suggestive allusion, some new and precious element in the thoughts of the sacred author.

This method, moreover, has, in common with all the profounder studies, the immense advantage of giving to